

Congo's future disposition will have a significant impact on its neighbors with potential consequences for much of Africa—and United States national interests.

Mr. President, some might wonder whether the United States has any interests in Africa. Since the end of the Cold War, there are those who have argued that the United States should cut back on its engagements abroad. In regards to Africa, they argue that we should focus on regions of greater geopolitical and economic importance. Let me state clearly my belief that without a doubt the United States needs to be actively engaged in Africa.

Why? Because just as we support democracy, free trade and human rights in the rest of the world, so too should we continue to support these goals in Africa. Moreover, the United States has strong economic interests in Africa. U.S. exports to Africa last year totaled \$6.2 billion, more than total U.S. exports to all of the states of the former Soviet Union combined. Since 1994, U.S. trade with sub-Saharan Africa has grown on average at 16.9% annually, outpacing growth in global trade in 1995 and 1996. Through our engagement with Africa we support and encourage partners who cherish the same values that we do. By encouraging political and economic stability we contribute to the preservation of our own nation's continued prosperity and security.

Mr. President, some among us may be disillusioned into believing that our interests in Africa are purely humanitarian, that Africa doesn't hold any strategic value for the United States. When I hear statements to this effect, I have to wonder whether they are living in the same world as the rest of us. As we have seen with the recent Asian financial crisis, global drug trade, and even the El Niño weather phenomenon, Americans today are more interconnected, if not interdependent, with the rest of the world than at any previous time in our nation's history. At this unique point in time as the sole superpower with the ability virtually to reach around the globe, the rest of the world has an equally unprecedented ability to touch us back. In such a global environment it is vital to our nation's security that we exercise vigilance in the conduct of our foreign relations.

Mr. President, even if we could stick our head in the sand, the rest of our body would be exposed to all of the negative consequences that a neglected Africa would incur. Imagine the effects of a large region of the world ignored and not encouraged to develop effective health systems, where new exotic diseases are not checked but given free reign to develop and old ones can develop drug resistance. The Asian bird flu would be nothing compared to what we might see. Imagine nations with minimal resources but great needs not supported to effectively maintain their natural environment, and compelled to

compromise rainforests and natural ecosystems vital to our planet's well-being. If we think El Niño is bad, just wait until we meet his big brother.

Mr. President, we wouldn't allow this to occur in any other part of the world, and we certainly can not afford to allow this to happen in Africa. Protecting American interests in Africa is no simple task. The subtleties and complexities that confront us in the 48 nations of sub-Saharan Africa require diplomatic skill and finesse. How does Rwanda move to democracy whilst Hutus vastly outnumber Tutsis, and distrust and violence on both sides goes back generations? How do ethnic communities in Kenya share power in such a way that the rights of the minority are protected? How does the Congo move towards democratic governance and financial responsibility after a generation of misgovernment and kleptocracy?

There are no easy solutions to any of these questions, but the answers must be found if Africa is to advance politically and economically—and U.S. national interests are to be protected—into the next century.●

TRIBUTE TO SHANNON WRIGHT

● Mr. HUTCHINSON. Mr. President, I rise today to remember and honor a young Arkansas school teacher who made the ultimate sacrifice for one of her students.

Children often think of their teachers as heroes. And there is no better word than "hero" to describe a courageous woman named Shannon Wright, a thirty-two year old English teacher at Westside Middle School. Shannon died in the tragic schoolyard shooting Tuesday along with four students. In the hail of gunfire, she gave her life in order to protect an eleven-year old girl, Emma Pittman. Emma says she believes Mrs. Wright saw the bullets coming and shielded her from being hit. Shannon was shot twice while she tried to protect the young girl from injury.

In the words of Emma Pittman's mother, "I feel she needs a hero award for saving our child. I want her family to know how grateful we are because she didn't think of herself—she thought of the children."

While Shannon will forever be remembered as a hero, it will be extremely difficult to ease the pain her death has brought. Shannon Wright was not only a teacher, she was a mother, a daughter, and a wife. She left behind her husband of twelve years, Mitchell, and her 2½ year old son Zane. Her life was devoted to serving others, and she was deeply loved by her family and her many friends. The loss of Shannon Wright will be mourned not only by those whose lives she touched everyday, but by the entire Jonesboro community, the state of Arkansas, and people throughout our nation.

This horrible act of violence has caused incredible pain for the people of

Northeast Arkansas. We grieve not only for Shannon Wright, but for the four girls who were killed, Natalie Brooks, Paige Herring, Stephanie Johnson, and Brittheny Varner. It's impossible to understand why such a tragedy occurred, especially in a schoolyard. While it seems that nothing good could ever come from something so terrible, Shannon Wright's death taught her students and the rest of us an incredibly important lesson about the power of selfless action. Shannon Wright's selfless action saved a young girl's life.

Shannon Wright will always be remembered as a hero who gave her life to protect the children.●

ORDER FOR STAR PRINT—SENATE REPORT 105-170

Mr. LOTT. I ask unanimous consent that Senate Report No. 105-170 be star printed with the changes that are at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. LOTT. I observe the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

REMOVAL OF INJUNCTION OF SECRECY—TREATY DOCUMENT NO. 105-38

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, as in executive session, I ask unanimous consent that the injunction of secrecy be removed from the following treaty transmitted to the Senate on March 27, 1998, by the President of the United States: Treaty with Venezuela on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters, Treaty Document No. 105-38.

I further ask unanimous consent that the treaty be considered as having been read the first time; that it be referred, with accompanying papers, to the Committee on Foreign Relations in order to be printed; and that the President's message be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The message of the President is as follows:

To the Senate of the United States:

With a view to receiving the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification, I transmit herewith the Treaty between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Republic of Venezuela on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters, signed at Caracas on October 12, 1997. I transmit also, for the information of the Senate, the report of the Department of State with respect to the Treaty.

The Treaty is one of a series of modern mutual legal assistance treaties